

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Aug. 4, 2020

## **Human Services hosts virtual sharing sessions today and tomorrow to celebrate efforts to reduce underage drinking in North Dakota**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division is hosting a series of virtual sharing sessions today and tomorrow to celebrate efforts implemented by communities throughout the state to prevent underage drinking among youth through a federal Partnership for Success grant.

Interested individuals can find links to the virtual sharing sessions at <https://prevention.nd.gov/schedule>.

Prevention efforts are producing results. Between 2009 and 2019, the percentage of North Dakota high school students reporting past 30-day alcohol use declined from 43.3 percent to 27.6 percent.

Alcohol misuse is a serious public health issue impacting everyone, especially individuals who are underage. Individuals who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely than individuals who start drinking at age 21 to meet the criteria for alcohol use disorder at some point in their lives.

"Prevention is a vital part of the behavioral health continuum of care," said Behavioral Health Division Assistant Director Laura Anderson. "Effective prevention creates an environment that promotes health and well-being, which prevents problems before they occur, and it makes economic sense, saving \$64 dollars for every one dollar invested."

In October 2015, the federal Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration awarded North Dakota a Partnership for Success Grant, providing \$1.6 million per year for five years. The grant ends next month. The department selected grantees from among communities identified as "high need" based on their population, consumption rate, and other factors, including risk factors for underage drinking, who chose to apply for funding.

Participating communities include:

- Upper Missouri Health District (Williams and McKenzie counties),
- Southwestern District Health Unit,
- Rolette County Public Health District,
- The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa,

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- Wells County District Health Unit,
- Central Valley Health District,
- The Spirit Lake Nation,
- Foster County Public Health,
- LaMoure County Health Department, and
- City-County Health District in Barnes County.

Over the past several years, these communities have followed a process to identify and implement evidence-based prevention efforts based on their local needs. The efforts being implemented in these communities include strategies to decrease both retail and social access to alcohol among underage youth, such as the implementation of responsible beverage service training and enforcement of current underage drinking policy and law.

Other strategies include partnerships with schools to implement substance abuse prevention curriculums, providing alternatives during high-risk times for underage drinking and enhancing policies to be less supportive of underage drinking.

“Change takes time, persistence and collaboration, but it is certainly worth it when we look at the lives that can be changed,” Anderson said. “We are looking forward to continuing to partner with communities to support their substance abuse prevention efforts.

Over the past nine years, the Behavioral Health Division has received federal discretionary funds, which it awarded to communities to help them develop local prevention infrastructure and decrease underage drinking, adult binge drinking and related consequences.

For free resources and information about substance abuse prevention, visit the North Dakota Prevention Resource and Media Center at <https://prevention.nd.gov/> and the Parents LEAD program at [www.parentslead.org/](http://www.parentslead.org/).

The division is responsible for reviewing and identifying service needs and activities in the state's behavioral health system to ensure health and safety, access to services and quality services. It also establishes quality assurance standards for the licensure of substance use disorder program services and facilities and provides policy leadership in partnership with public and private entities. For more information, visit [www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/](http://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/).

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